

DeWine tours Perrysburg farm after record flooding

By Bill Ryan, Sentinel-Tribune Farm Editor | Posted: Wednesday, June 19, 2019 3:40 pm

PERRYSBURG — Gov. Mike DeWine spent Wednesday morning visiting a Perrysburg Township farm and listening to farmers talk about the devastating effect of record-breaking rainfall.

“I saw for myself the disaster was as bad as it was described or worse,” DeWine said following the session. “This is a disaster of historic proportions. There have been some bad years, but there are tens of thousands of acres which will not be planted.”

The event was by invitation only.

Kris Swartz, who hosted the session at his farm, was pleased with the governor’s visit and praised him for listening and understanding the massive problems local farmers are facing.

“I like that the governor listened to the minor suggestions regarding policies that will help us survive,” Swartz said.

“He really understood the situation. He didn’t need an Agriculture 101 lesson, he knows you don’t plant crops in mud. It was really great.”

Upon his arrival at the Perrysburg Township farm, the governor went on a tour with Swartz out to the soggy fields. Upon his return, to the meeting in a Swartz barn, DeWine thanked everyone for attending and assured them that Ohio Department of Agriculture Secretary Dorothy Pelanda has been keeping him informed of the conditions.

He then opened up the floor to the farmers in attendance to share their stories and concerns. They were eager to have the governor’s ear.

“This is the worst weather we’ve ever seen. My dad is 81 and he’s never seen anything like this,” said Mark Drewes, a Hoytville-area farmer.

Drewes said that one of his concerns is getting enough corn to feed the cows for a neighboring dairy farm that he is contracted with to supply feed.

“This is the first time in my farming career that our backs are against the wall,” Drewes said.

He added that prevent planting insurance and other relief efforts may help.

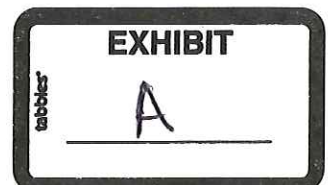
“It doesn’t help to put feed into the mouth of those cows,” Drewes added.

Nathan Eckel, a Perrysburg-area farmer has both grain fields and livestock.



DeWine Farm tour

Oho Gov. Mike DeWine (right) speaks with local farmer, Kris Swartz, at his farm along Reitz Road in Perrysburg Township Wednesday morning.



“We’re just in survival mode at this point. If we get through this year, it will be fine but what are we going to do next year?” he said.

Many farmers said that this is not a one-year situation. The ripple effects will linger for at least one or two more years. That is because ergonomically, there is a crop rotation which is followed to keep the soils at their peak and viable.

“Yes, we may make it to next year but it’s going to be painful,” Swartz said.

Other concerns that were raised:

- Having to deal with combating the weeds, which will thrive on the barren fields.
- Dealing with having to buy out contracted corn which is now not going to be planted.
- Having wheat fields planted last fall that are one-third failed, one-third dying in the field, and the one-third left questionable as to quality and may not be good.
- Questioning where there is any corn available and what will be its cost for those that need it.
- Stating the rules and regulations with collecting on prevent planning insurance are hampered if farmers end up harvesting their cover crops. With all the attention being focused on planting cover crops for this year, cover crop seed is now in limited supply.
- Asking if \$3 billion being made available through federal funding will only be accessible if the area counties are declared disaster areas.
- Pointing out that this could be a breaking point for some smaller and marginal farms without backup reserve funds.
- Talking about crippling regulations, based on four-year historical statistics for crop insurances, for newer and younger farmers who do not have that background.

After hearing from the farmers, DeWine told them they can help by documenting their statistics and providing them to Swartz, who was volunteered to be the point main for data.

The governor also suggested writing letters to national representatives, such as U.S. Rep. Bob Latta, R-Bowling Green, and both Ohio senators.

Bob Short, president of the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and a Williams County farmer, is staying positive.

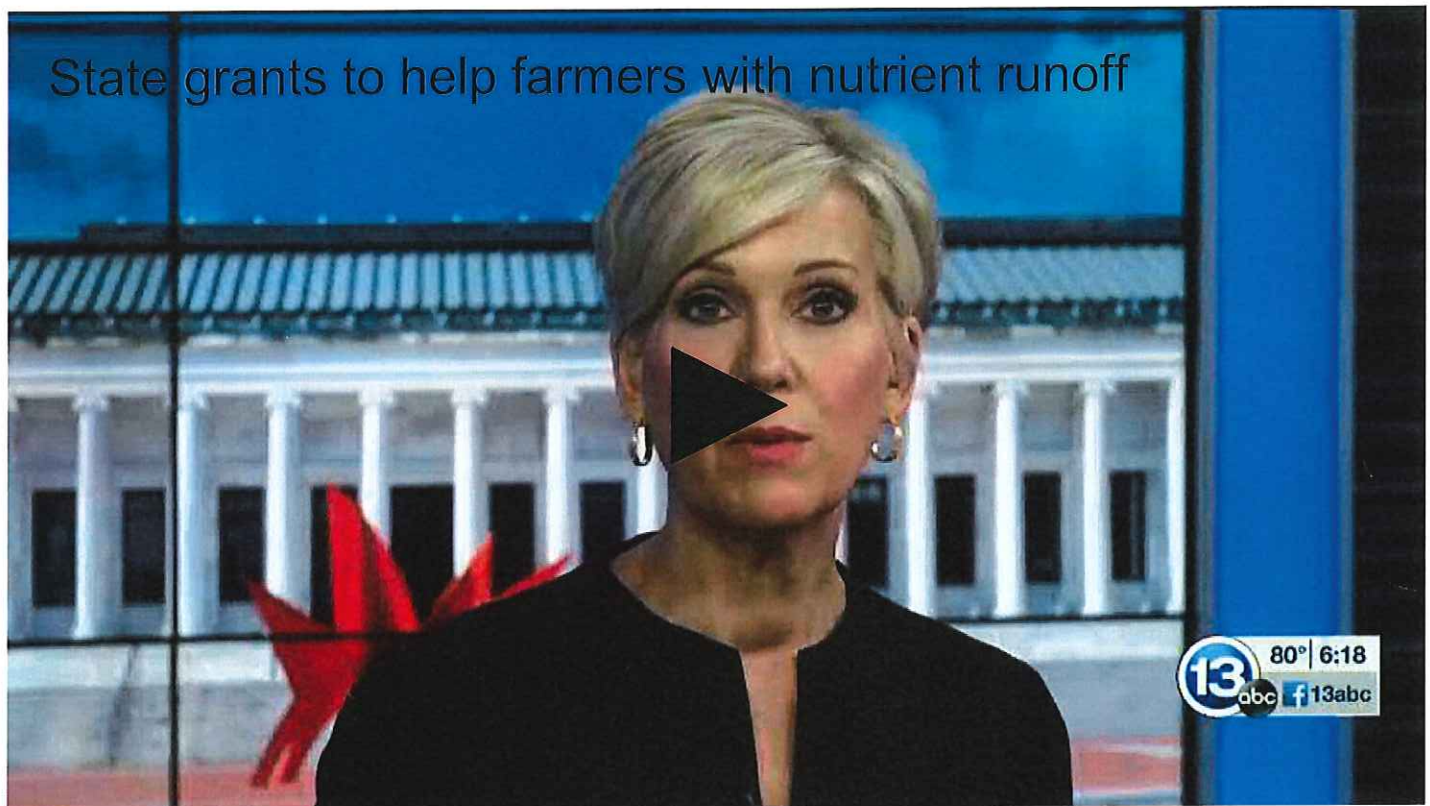
“Farmers are resilient. We always get through it, no matter what ‘it’ is. But this year will have a major ripple effect on many others,” he said.

As examples, he noted the fertilizer dealers, the seed companies, the livestock farmers, the co-ops and even the non-farmers.

“People are going to be hit hard if they have to buy an \$8 box of corn flakes or hamburger gets to be the price of steak and steak gets to be the price of lobster, etc. There are going to be long-lasting effects for

years to come,” Short said.

State grants to help farmers with nutrient runoff



By Heather Pollauf | Posted: Wed 5:24 PM, Jun 19, 2019 | Updated: Wed 6:41 PM, Jun 19, 2019

CUSTAR, Ohio (WTVG) - This time of year, all eyes are on Lake Erie, and the rivers that flow into the lake. Experts are keeping an eye on the phosphorus levels, and whether those are going to contribute to a harmful algal bloom later this summer. There's a local program that's helping farmers to keep those nutrients in their fields, and helping to offset some of those costs.

Tyler Drewes and his family grow alfalfa, wheat, soybeans and corn. He says he's only been able to plant half of his fields so far because of the weather. But heavy rains can cause another problem: nutrient runoff. And, like many other area farmers, Drewes is fighting it with the state's help. It starts with planting crops to keep the nutrients in place.

Senate Bill 299 has a total of \$23.5 million set aside for farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin. Under SB 299, the local soil and water conservation office offers two programs: Small Grain, and Working Lands Buffer Program.

The Drewes Farm is enrolled in the Small Grain Program. Tyler tells 13abc, "It'll help grain farmers incorporate wheat, oats, barley and rye into their operations, kind of give another product in the rotation, instead of back to the regular corn or beans. Which is somewhat typical for the area."

Under the Small Grain Program, the state provides incentives for those less-lucrative crops, and connects local farms to distribute manure more efficiently. That helps farmers identify spots that need nutrients, and those that don't.

Matthew Browne, Area Conservation Technician explains, "If they feel the push then to spread acres in these wet months and winter months, that's when we get our nutrient loading in the waterways."



Browne says that the Working Lands Buffer Program is another great way for farmers to get state help. He says the program "establishes a semi-permanent buffer between the farm fields and a stream or a ditch. So that vegetation will help capture the nutrients before they hit the waterway."

The Ohio Farm Bureau reports that \$3.5 million has already been awarded to farms in Northwest Ohio, with some of that money going to nearly 400 acres in Lucas County alone.

This is the first year for the program, and the timing is perfect. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration -- or NOAA -- predicts a severe algal bloom on Lake Erie, with already-high levels of phosphorus in the Maumee River.

Farmers interested in applying for assistance should follow this link.

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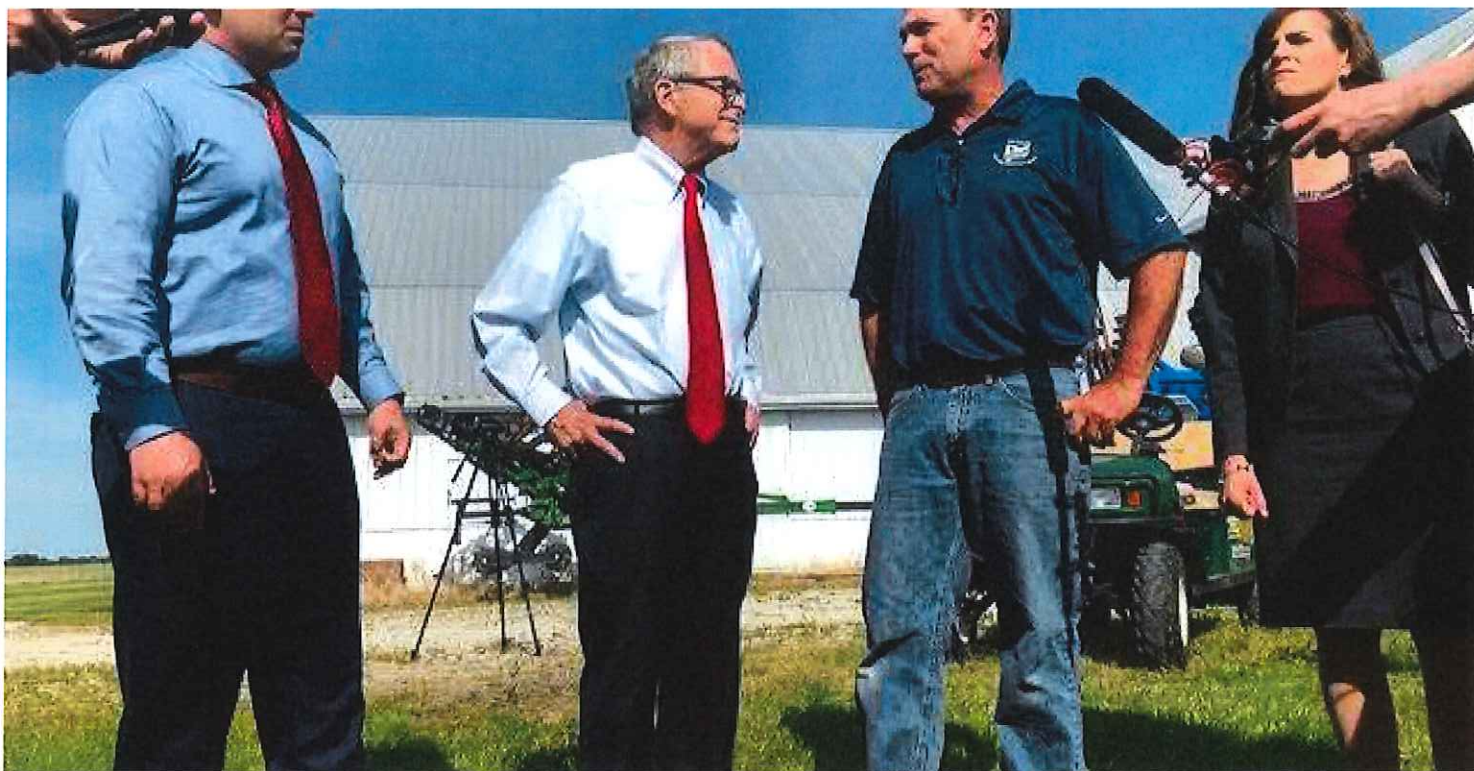


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GOV. DEWINE MAKES NW OHIO FARM VISIT: I CAN'T REMEMBER A SITUATION BAD AS THIS 🗣️

🕒 June 19, 2019 📁 Crops, Slider

By Dale Minyo and Joel Penhorwood

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, alongside Director of Agriculture Dorothy Pelanda, made a special trip to northwest Ohio Wednesday to see firsthand the struggles of Ohio crop and dairy farmers due to this year's inclement weather.

The Perrysburg area visit was hosted by Kris Swartz and welcomed farmers from multiple other counties to give their take on this year of hardship, whether it be in the fields or in the barns.

"I wanted to come here and see this for myself," said Gov. DeWine. "I've talked to a number of farmers in regard to this problem with the weather and it being too wet to put the crop in. Time is moving forward very quickly and this is probably in my lifetime, I can't remember a situation that was bad as this."

Gov. DeWine did send a letter to Sec. of Agriculture Sonny Perdue last week requesting a secretarial disaster declaration, in hopes of qualifying more Ohio farmers for federal aid.

Listen to the full press briefing with DeWine and Swartz here.

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"We're calling it a disaster in slow motion. Very little planted around here and I think economically on the farm and the farm communities it's going to be a really tough year," said Swartz. "If we miss the rain here tonight and tomorrow, I think I still can get some beans in, maybe 7-800 acres. But if we get an inch and a half of rain tonight, I think it's just about game over."

Hear Dale Minyo's conversation with Kris Swartz below.

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Wood County farmer Mark Drewes was on hand, highlighting the feed shortage concern dairy farmers are facing.

"Those cows have to have feed. There's no neighbors corn to buy either and this is coming off a historically bad winter where we lost all of our forages. We no longer have alfalfa – or very little alfalfa – we have very little corn, and this is the first time in my farming career I've felt our backs are truly against the wall," Drewes said. "I've never felt this kind of stress before. Crop insurance is a big part of our risk management program on our farm, but it does not put feed in those cows' mouths."

Tribune Chronicle

‘America’s backbone’ needs financial help

Think about the many times lately that we all have bemoaned the fact that our yards are so flooded or waterlogged that we can’t even cut the grass.

Then consider what the deluge of rain this spring has meant for those who rely on the fields for their livelihood. Rightly, these folks often are referred to as the “*backbone of America*.”



Undoubtedly, the fortitude of Ohio’s farmers and those in the Mahoning Valley — especially in light of this spring’s weather — must be recognized and appreciated.

Still, that appreciation doesn’t pay the bills.

Seemingly non-stop rain and flooding in recent weeks has been drowning the livelihoods of families who've farmed for generations in northeast Ohio.

Now Gov. Mike DeWine is stepping up to seek much-needed federal assistance for our farmers. It's crucial that the Trump administration agree to the request — not just to aid our farmers' current condition, but to help stabilize their future, as well.

DeWine on June 14 sent a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue requesting a USDA Secretarial disaster designation for Ohio amid heavy rainfall impacting Ohio farmers.

In his letter, DeWine noted that record rainfall through the spring planting season has been devastating to Ohio farmers, with flooding and saturated fields preventing them from planting crops.

The Ohio Farm Bureau Federation reports that this, in fact, is the worst planting season since it started tracking planting progress. That dates back to the 1970s.

Trumbull County farmer Dan Denman of Johnston recently told the Tribune Chronicle that he has struggled to get about 90 percent of his corn crop planted this spring.

"Of the 90 percent of the corn we planted, about 75 percent made it out of the ground. It was rough to plant this year," Denman said.

And he may be one of the lucky ones.

The latest report from the federal agriculture department says Ohio farmers have completed only 68 percent of their planned corn crop. In a typical year, farmers in the state would have nearly all of their corn fields planted by now. Looking forward to purchasing locally grown sweet corn from a roadside stand this summer? By the looks of things, I'd say don't get your hopes up.

The corn planting season is running out. Soybean planting also is way behind because of the wet weather.

It's clear now that many Ohio farmers will be forced to allow thousands of acres to go unplanted this year. That means not only loss of revenue for the farmers, but also a shortage of the product come fall. The ripple impact likely will result in higher prices in stores. While that's where many of us will feel the pinch, that's nothing compared to what farmers and the entire agricultural industry are facing.

Fertilizer dealers and farm equipment sellers will feel the squeeze, and Ohio's dairy and livestock farmers will face serious forage and feed shortages.

Mark Drewes, a northwest Ohio farmer who grows corn that supplies two major dairy operations, said he's only been able to plant a fraction of what's needed.

"For the first time in my farming career, I've felt like my back is against the wall," he said. *"Crop insurance doesn't put feed into those cows' mouths."*

Ohio farmers now say it will take years to recover their losses.

While DeWine said Ohio is working to identify any and all sources of possible relief, he noted that a federal disaster declaration for Ohio will allow aid and other assistance to be made available to Ohio's farmers.

That may be critical this year because, as farmers told DeWine, crop insurance will keep most farmers from going under, but it's not designed to cover such widespread losses.

For certain, the USDA must approve the sorely needed assistance that would accompany a disaster declaration from the USDA for Ohio.

Let's hope that approval comes — and without delay.